

ECUADOR'S NAPO WILDLIFE CENTER

AMAZON ADVENTURE

A stunning ecolodge and a shining example
of the benefits of ecotourism in the heart
of the world's richest rainforest



*A pioneering and successful
endeavour in ecotourism*



■ The Napo
Wildlife Center
Ecolodge, rio
Añangu, Yasuni
National Park.
On the opening
spread, a Scarlet
macaw *Ara
macao* at the
Napo clay lick.

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PHOTOS BY ANDREA & ANTONELLA FERRARI

Yasuni National Park is located in Ecuador, covering an area of 9,823 km² between the Napo and Curaray Rivers in Napo and Pastaza Provinces in the Amazon region. The National Park lies within the Napo moist forests ecoregion and is primarily rainforest. The park is about 250 km from Quito and was designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 1989. It is within the claimed ancestral territory of the Huaorani indigenous people and home to two uncontacted indigenous tribes, the Tagaeri and the Taromenane. Yasuni National Park is arguably the most biologically diverse spot on earth. The Park is at the center of a small zone where amphibian, bird, mammal, and vascular plant diversity all reach their maximum levels within the western hemisphere. Moreover, the Park breaks world records for local-scale (less than 100 sq/km) tree, amphibian, and bat species richness, and is one of the richest spots in the world for birds and

mammals at local scales as well. The Park holds a world record 150 amphibian species for places with comparable landscapes. It also is at the top for amphibian diversity compared to other sites sampled in the western Amazon. The total of its amphibian species is more than the United States and Canada combined. Reptile species diversity in the Park is also very high, with 121 documented species found. In spite of covering less than 0.15% of the Amazon Basin,

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Giant river otter
Pteronura brasiliensis.



■ A male
Ecuadorian
mantled howler
Alouatta palliata
aequatorialis
getting minerals
at the Napo
salt lick.



Yasuni is home to approximately one-third of amphibian and reptile species. The Park also harbors high levels of fish diversity with 382 known species, and it is home to at least 596 bird species - which comprises one-third of the total native bird species for the Amazon. The Park is also rich in species of bats: on a regional scale, the Amazon Basin has an estimated 117 bat species, but on a local scale, Yasuni is estimated to have comparable richness. In a single hectare, Yasuni has over 100,000 different species of insects which is roughly the amount of insect species that can be found in all of North America. The Park also boasts one of the world's richest levels of vascular plants. It is one of nine places in the world that has over 4,000 vascular plant species per 10,000 sq/km. The Park contains many species of trees and shrubs and holds at least four world records for documented tree and liana richness as well as three world records for diversity in woody plant species. Yasuni also hosts a list of endemic species such as 43 different species of vertebrates and 220-720 different plant species. A species of bat, *Lophostoma yasuni*, is endemic here and the Treefrog *Osteocephalus yasuni* is named after it. Sadly, Yasuni National Park is also home to an estimated 1.7 billion barrels of crude oil - 40 percent of Ecuador's reserves - in the Ishpingo-Tiputini-Tambococha (ITT) oil fields, so colonization, deforestation, illegal logging, and unsustainable hunting are severely affecting its area at the moment.

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Convict treefrog ■
Boana calcarata.



Common squirrel monkey *Saimiri sciureus*. Troops of this iconic species are often encountered along the Añangu river.

■ Agami heron
Agamia agami.
This is a
stunningly
beautiful but
exceedingly
wary species.



A PIONEERING VISION COME TRUE

There are several ways to visit Yasuni, but the Napo Wildlife Center is the ultimate alternative luxury ecohotel in Amazonian Ecuador. This pioneering ecotourism project includes the conservation of approximately over 53,000 acres (over 21,400 hectares) of the most pristine Amazon rainforest within the National Park, being located on the banks of the Añangucocha Lake, within the unique and ancestral territory of the Kitchwa Añangu local community. In the early 90s members of the Kitchwa Añangu community envisioned building a lodge that could attract tourists from all parts of the world. This project would be an opportunity to provide jobs for the community and to protect their land and its wildlife, so they built with great effort a few cabins and a large main house for the dining room and the kitchen. However, at that

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Left, Hoatzin
Opisthocomus hoazin;
top right,
Red-capped
Cardinal
Paroaria gularis;
bottom right,
Yellow-rumped
cacique
Cacicus cela.





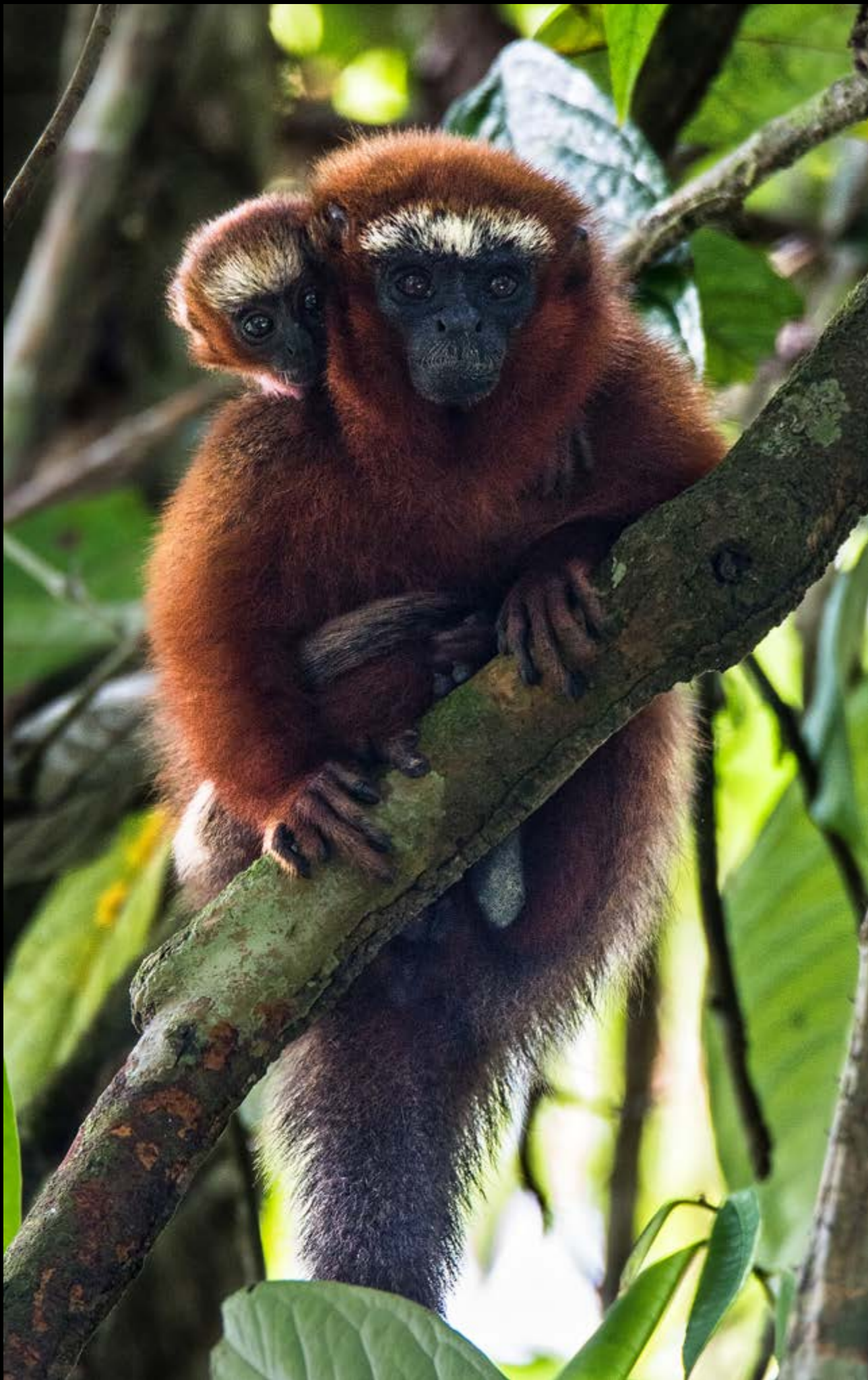
A flock of Dusky-headed Parakeet *Aratinga weddellii* at the riverside Napo clay lick.

early stage they needed more money to finish the building, which remained incomplete. They wanted to build a larger infrastructure, and ultimately be the biggest and best luxury hotel in the Amazon rainforest in Ecuador. This would be a place with first class facilities and accommodations, providing visitors with great comfort and offering them an intimate wildlife experience in the middle of the Amazon. Then, in 2000, with the support of several national and international organizations, the Napo Wildlife Center project was finally able to move forward. And the community's dream became true. In 2004, thanks to the community initiative and the financial and technical assistance of different organizations, the Napo Wildlife Center was born and started to welcome visitors from all parts of the

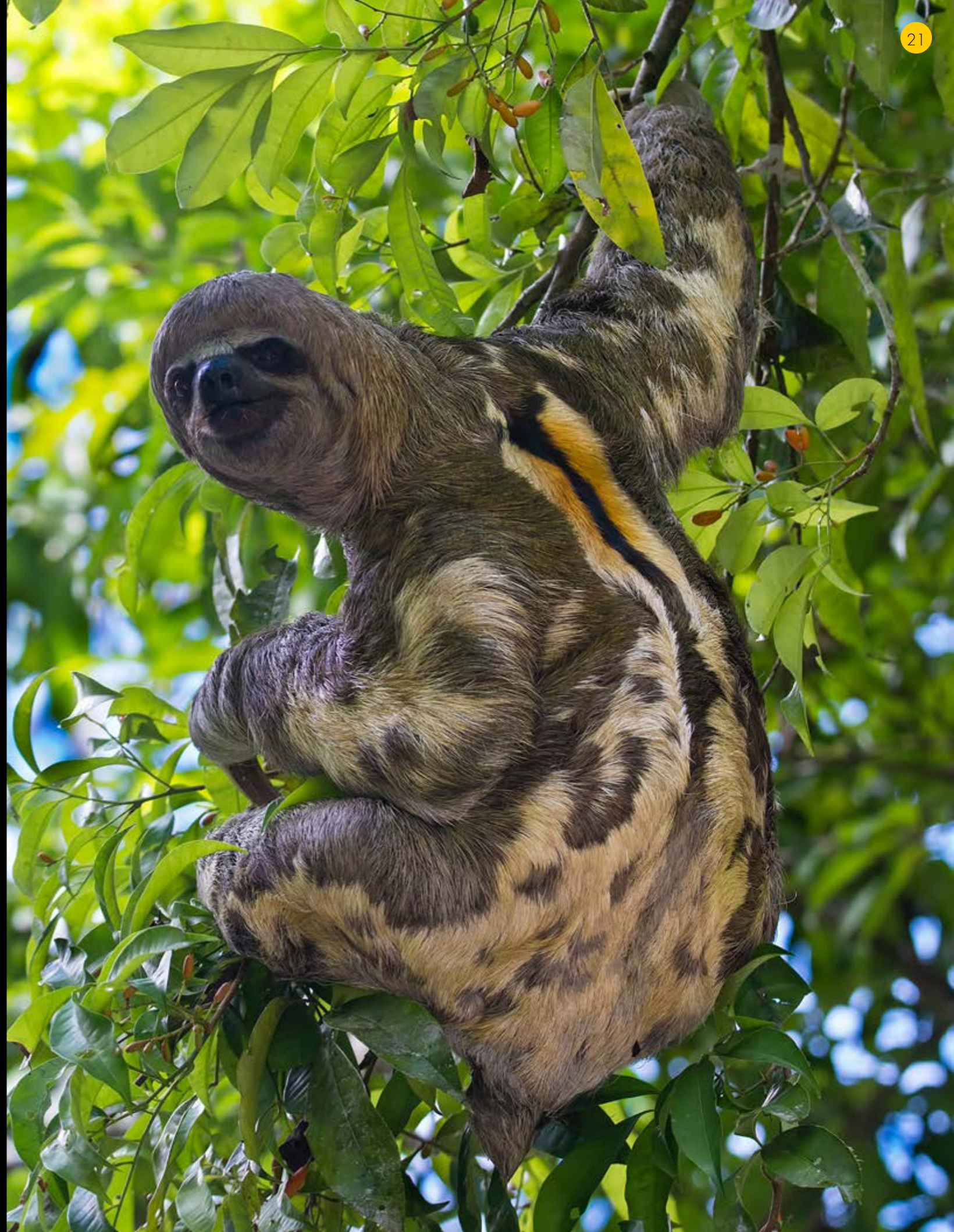
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Black caiman
Melanosuchus niger
are commonly seen
in the waters of the
Añangucocha.



Left, White-browed titi monkey or White-tailed titi *Callicebus discolor*. Right, Brown-throated sloth *Bradypus variegatus*.





The incredibly beautiful, peaceful Añangucocha seen from the observation tower of the Napo Wildlife Center Ec lodge.



Far left,
Crested Owl
Lophotrix cristata.
Left, Rufescent
Tiger heron
Tigrisoma lineatum.

world. Today, the Napo Wildlife Center is considered the foremost luxury Amazon lodge in Ecuador and the Añangu Community has been nationally and internationally recognized by guests and companies for its great organization and operation, service and for the great experience provided to guests. The Añangu community is truly a shining, admirable example of community-based ecotourism. This project not only protects more than 82 square miles of pristine rainforest, but also makes it possible for the community to be auto sustainable, as all profits are for the members of the community and to build other projects for tourism, conservation, health and education.


EXPERIENCING THE AMAZON IN SAFETY AND COMFORT

The Napo Wildlife Center experience really begins on Añangu's black-water creek ride, as we paddle our way through waters that look like fine black tea, under the shaded canopy of the rainforest. This almost two-hour ride gives visitors one of the best chances of watching several bird, primate, reptile and large mammal species in Añangu, quickly spotted by our guides as they silently paddle through the water. Electric eels and stingrays can be seen swimming past the boat as it silently slides through this always stunning trip (jaguars, tapirs, peccaries and anacondas have also been spotted here by groups of arriving visitors). This is the perfect introduction to the Amazon ecosystems and wildlife - there are amazing trees and vegetation

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Ecuadorian capuchin ■
Cebus albifrons aequatorialis
are opportunist feeders.

A large group of parrots is gathered around a water source in a forest. In the foreground, several Orange-cheeked Parrots (Pyrilia barrabandi) are visible, characterized by their green bodies and bright orange-yellow patches on their chests and faces. They are standing on a muddy bank or in the shallow water. Above them, a large number of Cobalt-winged Parakeets (Brotogeris cyanoptera) are in flight, their wings blurred, showing a vibrant blue color. The background is a dark, moss-covered rock face, and the overall scene is illuminated by natural light, creating a rich, colorful environment.

Cobalt-winged Parakeets
Brotogeris cyanoptera and
Orange-cheeked Parrots
Pyrilia barrabandi at the
forest Napo clay lick.



■ Top left, *White-bellied Spider monkey* *Ateles belzebuth*; top right, *Great Kiskadee* *Pitangus sulphuratus*. Bottom left, *Smooth-billed Ani* *Crotophaga ani*; bottom right, *Russet-backed Oropendola* *Psarocolius angustifrons*.

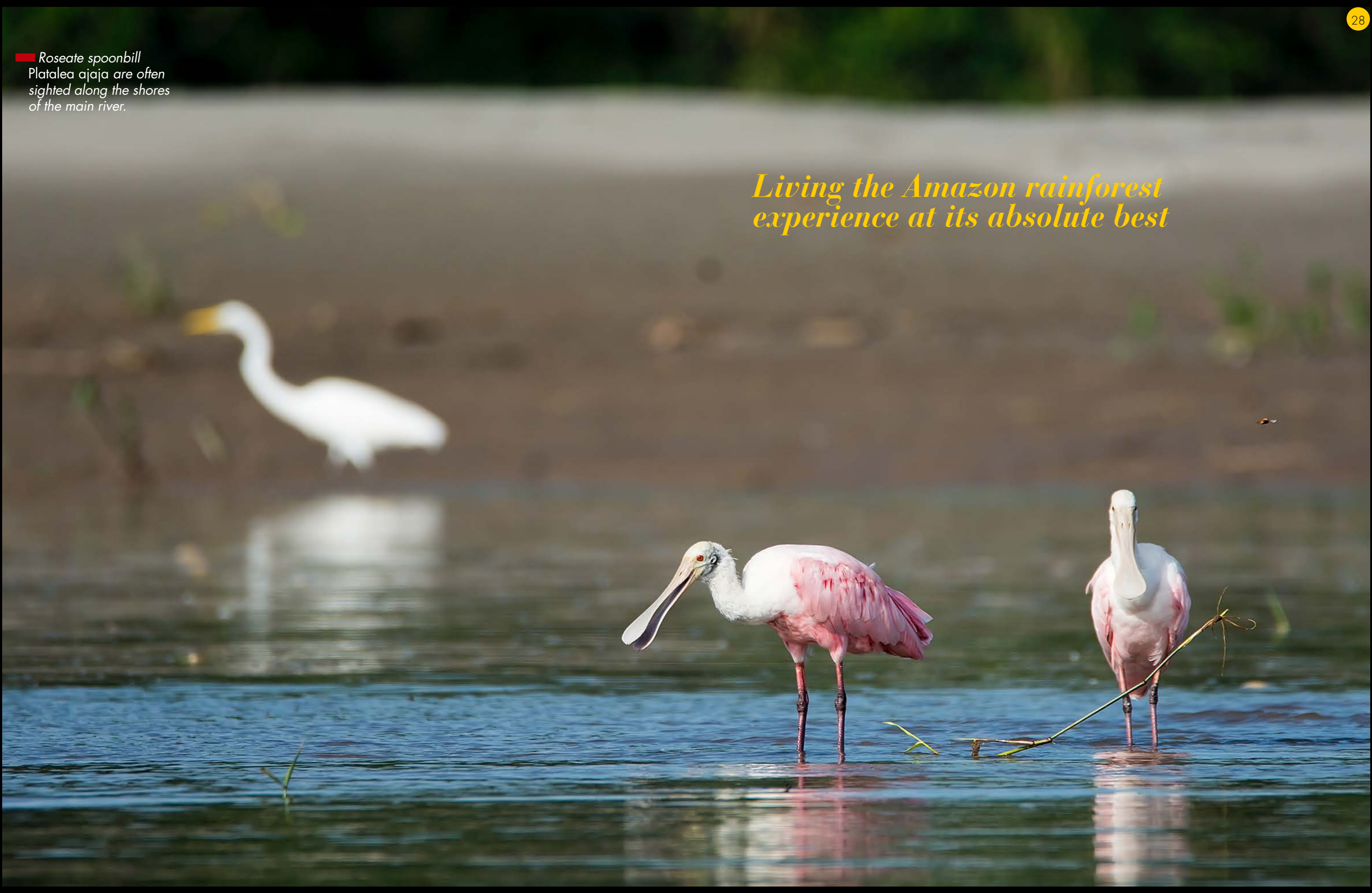


Ecuadorian mantled
howler *Alouatta palliata*
aequatorialis.



■ Roseate spoonbill
Platalea ajaja are often
sighted along the shores
of the main river.

*Living the Amazon rainforest
experience at its absolute best*





■ Top left, Gray-bellied hawk *Accipiter poliogaster*;;
 top right, Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus*.
 Bottom left, Black-capped *donacobius*
Donacobius atricapilla;
 bottom right, Green-and-Rufous Kingfisher
Chloroceryle inda.

■ Leaf-footed bug,
Family Coreidae.



adapted to this flooded ecosystem. Keep a watchful eye for any movement in the branches, undergrowth or water: it may be a troop of monkeys, a pair of raucous macaws, crazy-looking hoatzins as one gets near the Añangu lake, or a family of endangered Giant Otters leading one's canoe's path with their loud calls and curious look at the canoes. The lodge also offers canoe rides down other fascinating black-water streams, and at night dozens of medium and large Black caimans can be safely approached as they patrol the waters. The creek gradually widens, opening into the stunningly beautiful, serene waters of Añangu Lake. You can finally see the lodge's beautiful construction on the opposite side of the lake. The lake is home to hundreds of freshwater fish species (including piranhas, giant Arapaimas, lung fish, stingrays and peacock bass), otters, aquatic birds and endangered turtles. Swimming in the lake is however banned due to the increasing Black caiman population, an outcome of Napo's conservation policies that have helped so many endangered species recover in Añangu territory and its waters: an important genetic reserve for all the Yasuni area, as these species have been depleted elsewhere by hunting and developments. One of the highlights at NWC is going out on a very early excursion to reach two of Ecuador's most accessible parrot clay licks along the Napo region. These parrot clay licks are exclusive part of the reserve and lodge territory and are just two of the over a dozen clay licks found on the Añangu Community

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Giant river otter ■
Pteronura brasiliensis.



■ Left, Demerara Falls Treefrog *Boana cinerascens*; right, Clown tree frog *Dendropsophus reticulatus*.





*The Amazon
rainforest landscape
at dawn, see from
the Napo Wildlife
Center Ecolodge.*



Left, Scarlet macaw *Ara macao*; right, Cobalt-winged Parakeets *Brotogeris cyanoptera* and Orange-cheeked Parrots *Pyrrhuloxia barrabandi* at the forest Napo clay lick.




■ *Black caiman
Melanosuchus
niger - notice
the blood-filled
tabanid flies
behind its eye.*

territory. The parrot clay licks can be reached by following the Giant Otter creek downstream on dugout canoe near the Napo river - there are well established and comfortable blinds in each parrot lick in order to provide visitors best viewing and high quality photo/video opportunities. The riverside clay lick is commonly visited by Mealy, Blue-headed, Yellow-crowned, Orange-winged and Orange-cheeked parrots, Cobalt-winged, Dusky-headed and White-eyed parakeets, with the occasional rarities like Scarlet-shoulder parrotlet

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Top left,  Clown tree frog *Dendropsophus reticulatus*; top right, Convict treefrog *Boana calcarata*. Bottom left, Demerara Falls Treefrog *Boana cinerascens*; bottom right, Smoky jungle frog *Leptodactylus pentadactylus*.



*Exploring a mystical system of
rainforest waterways by canoe*



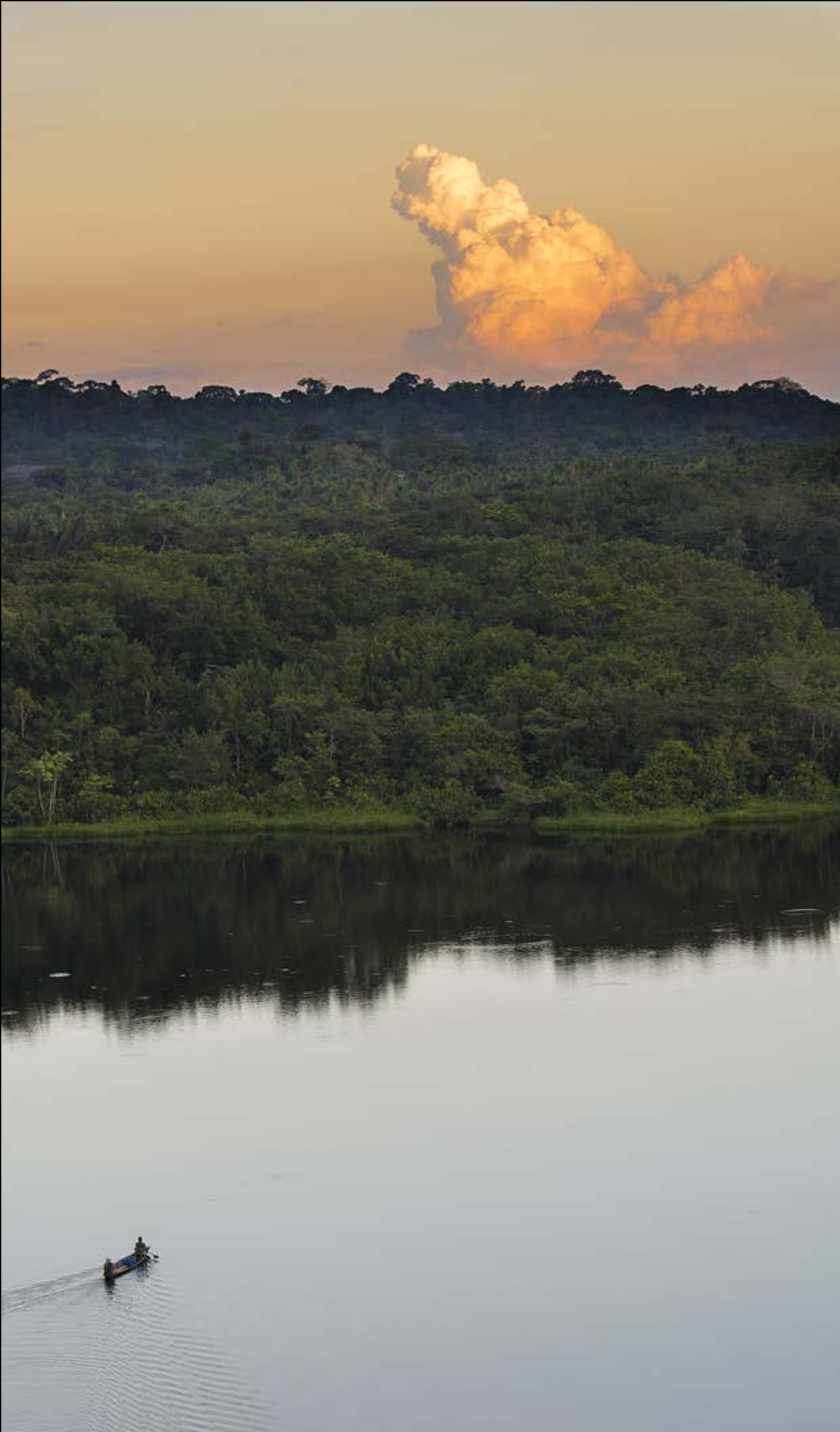
Amazon
rainforest
landscape with
Kichwa boatmen,
rio Añangu.


Common squirrel
monkey *Saimiri sciureus*;
right, Brown-throated
sloth *Bradypus*
variegatus.





Giant river otter ■
Pteronura brasiliensis.
This is a very fast,
quite vocal and
exceptionally active
predatory species
which feeds on fish.



Left,  the Añangucocha seen by the observation tower; right, Hoatzin *Opisthocomus hoazin*.

and Scarlet macaws; the blind in the forest (*Saladero de Pericos*) is typically visited by a thousand or more Cobalt-winged Parakeets. From late October through early April, hundreds of Orange-cheeked Parrots are also found in the mix, as are rarities such as the Scarlet-shouldered Parrotlet and occasional Scarlet and Red-and-Green macaws. Evening paddle boat rides offer an excellent opportunity of safely getting closer to the caimans, watch night-monkeys and other wildlife of the margins of the lake: a unique experience under the stars with the back-music of hundreds of frogs, toads, insects, nocturnal birds and the splashes of fish and caimans as they feed and mate. This beautiful lake will always remain an ideal, picture-perfect backdrop for our trip to the Napo Wildlife Center. The Añangu have also wisely invested in an environmentally sustainable sewage system, the best in the Napo region and probably the best in the Amazon. All waste water is treated to the highest standards in order to keep the swamps clean of human activity. Quality of effluent water is actually higher than the lake environment. Power is generated by a top-of-the-line hybrid system featuring solar panels, industrial batteries and noiseless generators - an efficient system that generates energy with almost no impacts. ●





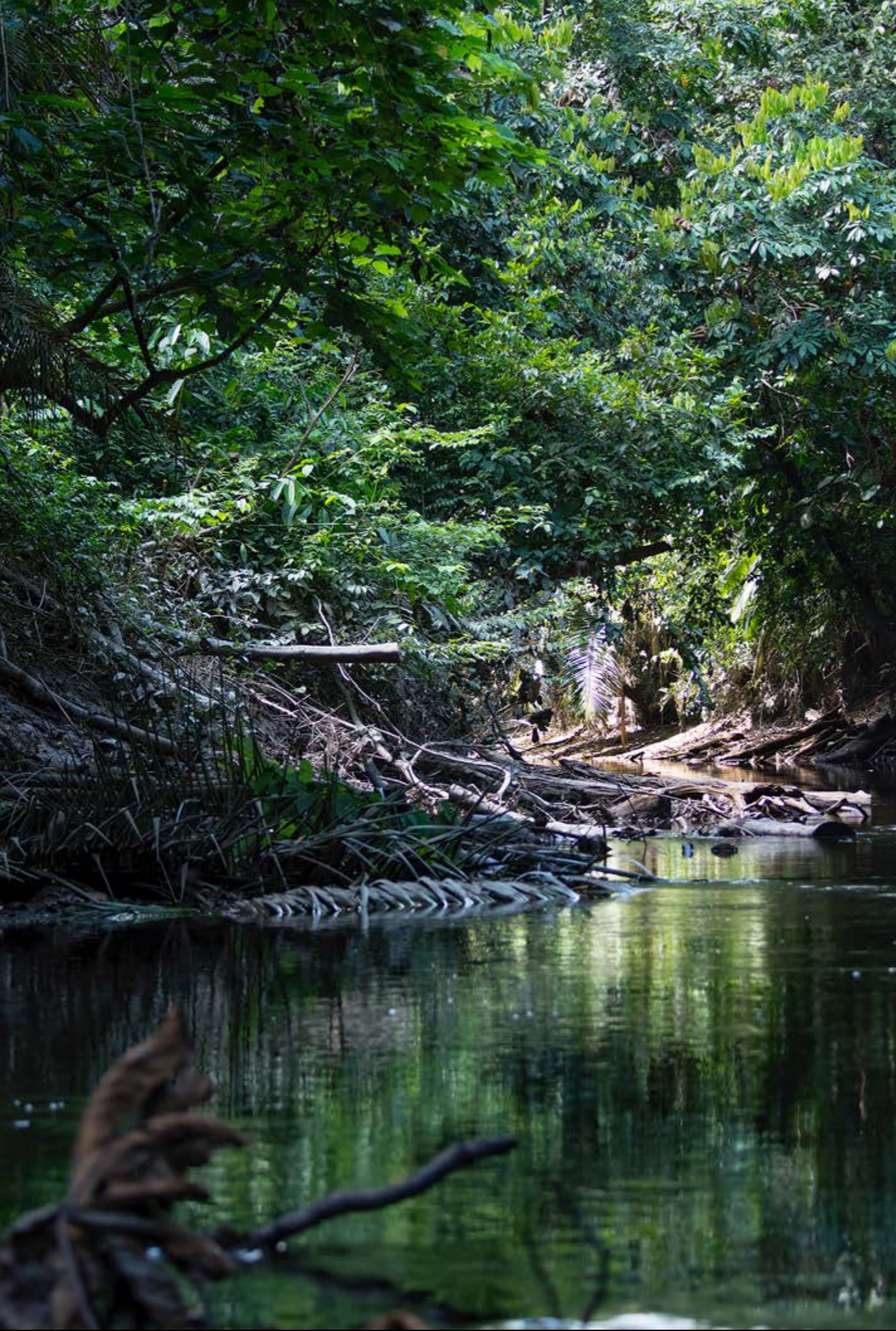
Numbers of ■
Black caiman
Melanosuchus niger
cruise the still waters
of the Añangucocha
in front of the Napo
Wildlife Center
and Ecolodge.

■ Cobalt-winged Parakeets *Brotogeris cyanoptera* and Orange-cheeked Parrots *Pyrilia barrabandi* at the Napo forest clay lick.

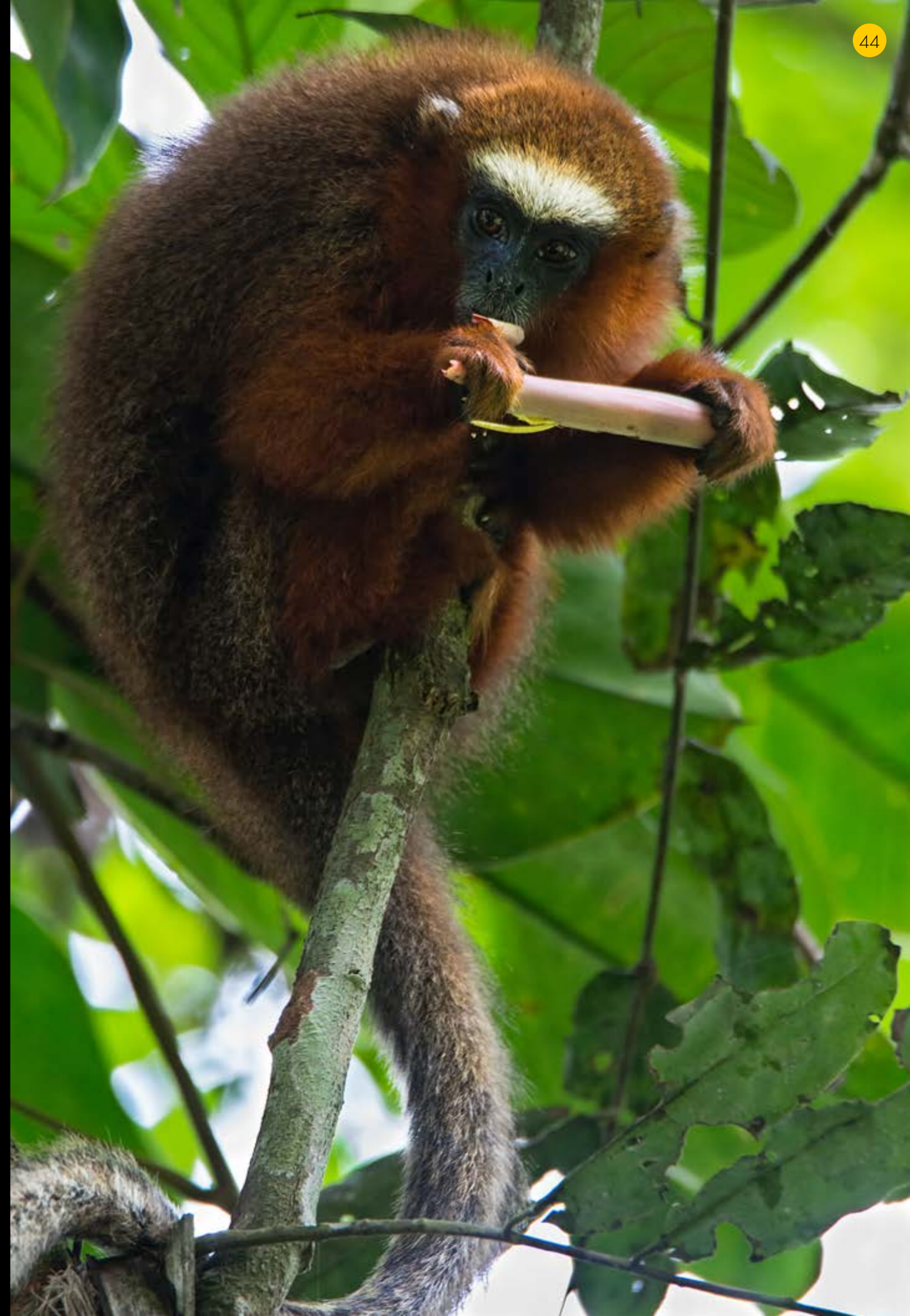




■ *Giant river otter*
Pteronura
brasiliensis feeding
on its freshly-
caught fish prey,
rio Añangu, Napo
Wildlife Center
Ecolodge.

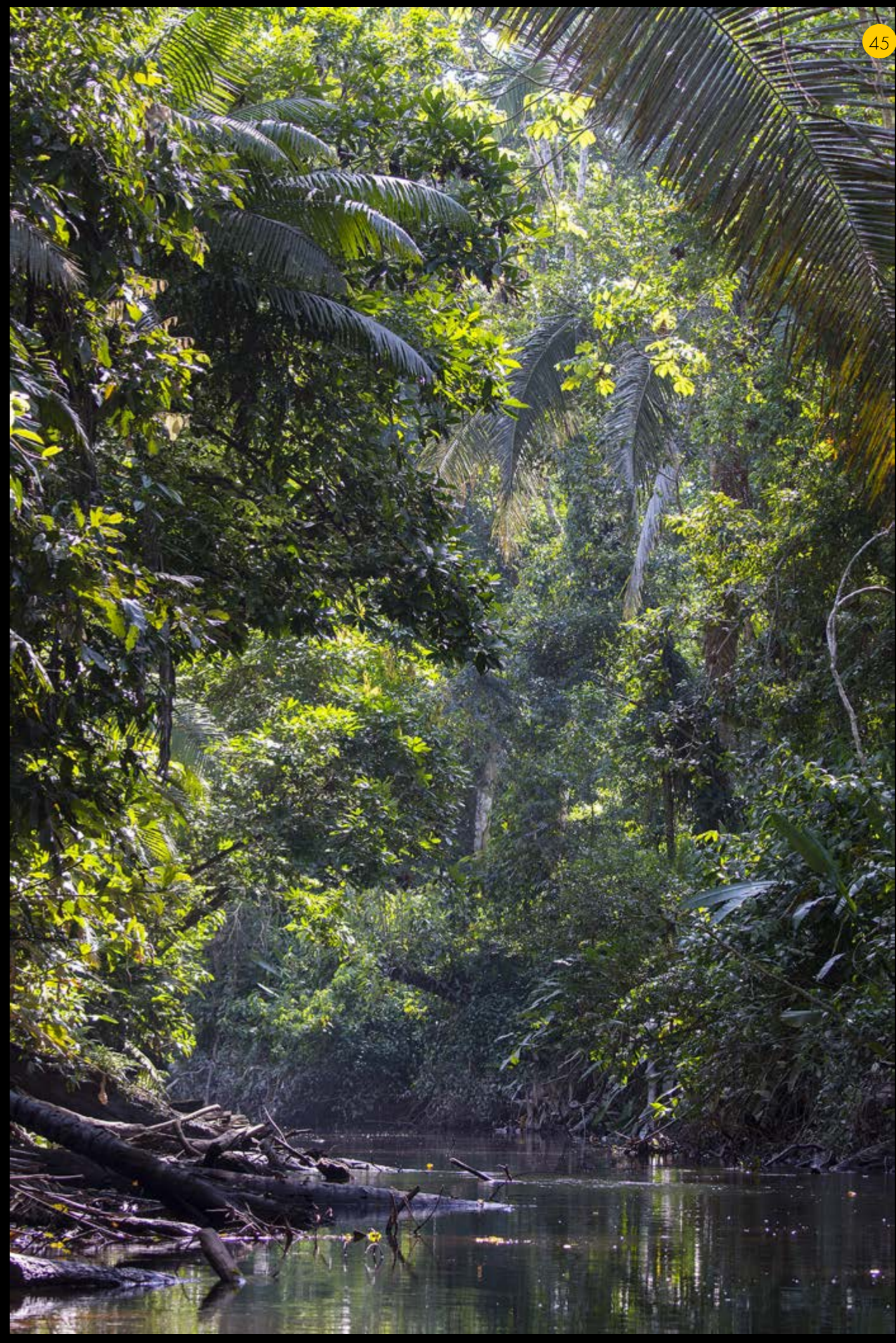


■ *Left, Amazon rainforest landscape, rio Añangu; right, White-browed titi monkey or White-tailed titi Callicebus discolor.*





■ *Left, Ecuadorian mantled howler *Alouatta palliata aequatorialis*; right, the unmistakable Amazon rainforest landscape along the rio Añangu.*



A colorful, rowdy, noisy spectacle on the clay cliffs



■ Yellow-crowned Amazon or Yellow-crowned Parrot *Amazona ochrocephala*, Blue-headed Parrot *Pionus menstruus* and Dusky-headed Parakeet *Aratinga weddellii* at the Napo riverside clay lick.



Alarmed by the arrival of our canoe, a very large Black caiman *Melanosuchus niger* launches itself in the black waters of the rio Añangu.



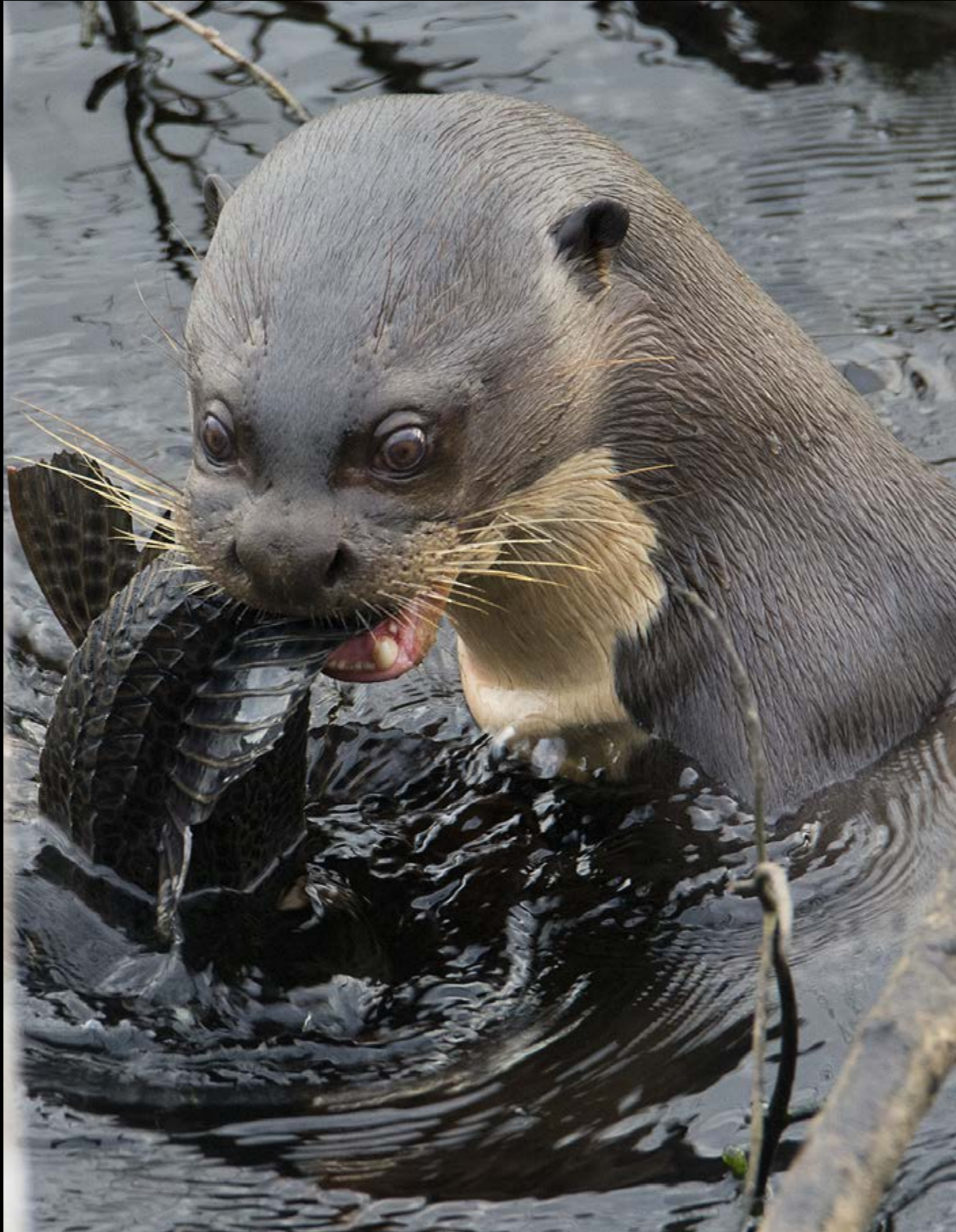
■ Crested Owl
Lophotrix cristata.
This is a very wary,
uncommonly
sighted species
which usually
perches in deep
shadow.

*Black caiman ■
Melanosuchus niger are
commonly observed cruising
the still waters of the
Añangucocha, especially at
dawn and sunset.*





*The peaceful, mist-
shrouded landscape of the
Añangucocha at dawn.*



■ Left, a Giant river otter *Pteronura brasiliensis* feeding on an armored catfish *Plecostomus* sp. right in front of the Napo Wildlife Center Ecolodge; right, Russet-backed Oropendola *Psarocolius angustifrons* in its typical call-bowing pose.



*Black caiman ■
Melanosuchus niger. Notice
the very large and colorful
tabanid flies feeding
off its blood.*





■ Left, Masked crimson tanager *Ramphocelus nigrogularis*; right, Convict treefrog *Boana calcarata*.





The stunningly ■
beautiful, peaceful
Amazon rainforest
landscape one can admire
from the rio Añangu.

*Always keeping eyes open
for a possible predator*



■ Ecuadorian mantled howler *Alouatta palliata aequatorialis* getting minerals at the forest salt lick of the Napo Wildlife Center Ecodge.



■ Left, Tree runner
Plica plica;
right, an unusual
portrait of
a Agami heron
Agamia agami.





Ecuadorian capuchin █
Cebus albifrons aequatorialis
displaying its huge canines in
a threat posture.



■ Left, Demerara Falls
 Treefrog *Boana*
cinerascens; center,
 Clown tree frog
Dendropsophus
reticulatus;
 right, Demerara Falls
 Treefrog *Boana*
cinerascens.

■ A typical Amazon rainforest riverside landscape along the shores of Añangucocha in front of the Napo Wildlife Center Ecolodge.

